

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIBREV 01693 281025Z

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INFO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1693

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EMIN, GB
SUBJECT: GABONESE URANIUM SALES

REF: STATE 197701

1. NEITHER WE NOR LOCAL BUSINESS CONTACTS HAVE PICKED UP RUMOR REPORTED REFTTEL REGARDING POSSIBLE CHANGE IN GOG POLICY UNDER WHICH ALL GABONESE URANIUM CURRENTLY BEING SOLD TO FRENCH CEA.
2. IT HAS BEEN EMBASSYS UNDERSTANDING THAT CEA IS CURRENTLY PAYING ABOVE WORLD MARKET PRICE IN ORDER ASSURE ITSELF ACCESS TO GABONESE URANIUM OUTPUT. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALMK THAT PRICE PAID BY CEA WAS RAISED SHARPLY CN 1974 AND AGAIN IN 1975 THROUGH BILATERAL NEGTIATIONS AT GOVERNMENT LEVEL, SUGGESTING GOF MIGHT BE WILLIDG PUT UP WITH FURTHER PRICE BOOST IF NECESSARY TO COMPETE WITH OTHER POTENTIAL BUYERS.
3. DESPITE FOREGOING, HOWEVER, THERE MAY WELL BEYSOME PROSPECT FOR OTHER BUYERS IF CURRENT EFFORTS TO EXPAND GABONESE URANIUM OUTPUT BEAR FRUIT. UNION CARBIDE IS ALREADY ENGAGED IN EXPLORATION ACTIVITES IN CONCESSION AREA GRANTED IT LAST YEAR BY GOG, AND SAME COMPANY IS REPORTEDLY NEARING AGREEMENT WITH FRENCH CEA FOR JOIINT
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PAGE 02 LIBREV 01693 281025Z

EXPLORATION IN ADJOINING PORTIONS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE

COXKESKCON AREAS. BEYOND THIS, SMQE COMPANY IN CURRENT PRODUCTION (COMUF) PLANNING INCREASE ITS OUTPUT APPROXIMATELY 25PCT IN NEXT TWO YEARS AND TO UPGRADE THIS OUTPUT TO YELLOW CAKE, PRODUCT MORE READILY NEGOTIATED ON WORLD MARKET.

4. EMBASSY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ANY BACKGROUND AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT ON SOURCE OF RUMOR QUOTED REFTEL. ONLY PREVIOUS REFERENCE TO NON-FRENCH SALE OF URANIUM WE HAVE SEEN WAS IN 75 LAGOS 11520, WHICH REPORTED IRANIAN AMBASSADORS CLAIM THAT GOG WAS PREPARED SELL URANIUM TO IRAN AS PART OF BROADER PACKAGE FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION. TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER DEVELOPMENT ON THIS FRONT, BUT REJUVENATED IRANIAN REPORT MIGHT PERHAPS HAVE BEEN AT ORIGIN OF LATEST FLURRY. STEIGMAN

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